



Department of Health

Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

June 15, 2012

Health Care Provider

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a new international growth standard statistical distribution in 2006, which describes the growth of children ages 0 to 59 months living in environments believed to support what WHO researchers view as optimal growth of children in six countries throughout the world, including the U.S. The distribution shows how infants and young children grow under these conditions, rather than how they grow in environments that may not support optimal growth.

Beginning on September 10, 2012, the WIC program will be assessing the growth for infants and children ages 0 to 2 years of age using the WHO growth standards, based on CDC recommendations for health care providers. WIC will continue to use the CDC growth charts for children 2 years of age and older.

The rationale for use of the WHO growth standards for infants and children, includes:

- The WHO growth standards establish growth of the breastfed infant as the norm for growth. The WHO charts reflect growth patterns among children who were predominantly breastfed for at least 4 months and were still breastfeeding at 12 months.
- The WHO standards provide a better description of physiological growth in infancy. Clinicians often use the CDC growth charts as standards on how young children should grow. However the CDC growth charts are references; they identify how typical children in the US did grow during a specific time period. Typical growth patterns may not be ideal growth patterns. The WHO growth charts are standards; they identify how children should grow when provided optimal conditions.
- The WHO standards are based on an extensive study designed with the express purpose of creating growth charts. The WHO standards were constructed using longitudinal length and weight data measured at frequent intervals. For the CDC growth charts, weight data was not available between birth and 3 months of age and the sample sizes were small for sex and age groups during the first 6 months of age.

The WHO growth standards can be found at www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/who_charts.htm

Sincerely,

Ann M. Barone
Chief, WIC Program
401-222-4604

Attachments